

CONGRESSMAN DAVIS TARGETS ASIAN CARP AS FOOD SOURCE TO REDUCE POVERTY

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CONTACTS: Tumia Romero (On Site)

tumia.romero@mail.house.gov O: 202-225-5006 - C: 773-343-0006

Chris McCloud (IDNR)

chris.mccloud@illinois.gov O: 217-785-0075

WASHINGTON, DC (MAY 9, 2012) – CONGRESSMAN DANNY K. DAVIS BRINGS TARGET HUNGER NOW! CAMPAIGN TO WASHINGTON, D.C.; POPULAR ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAM USES ASIAN CARP TO FEED THOSE IN NEED

WASHINGTON D.C. - U.S. Congressman Danny K. Davis (D-Illinois) has partnered with The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to bring its popular 'Target Hunger Now!' program in the nation's capital to raise awareness about hunger and showcase Asian carp as a healthy and protein rich food source for all. The Department will demonstrate recipes at a Congressional Black Caucus luncheon featuring famed Louisiana Chef Philippe Parola. 'Target Hunger Now!' is a humanitarian program aimed at providing food banks and other organizations throughout the state with ready to eat Asian carp meals.

The luncheon and Asian carp forum on Capitol Hill was done at the request of U.S. Congressman Danny K. Davis (D-Illinois) who is supportive of using Asian carp to reduce food insecurity throughout Illinois and the nation.

"I believe silver fin commonly known as Asian Carp is an excellent food source and when prepared correctly, is a tasty and delightful dish. It can go a long way towards helping to meet the needs of hungry people," said Congressman Danny K. Davis.

'Target Hunger Now!' is one of the largest humanitarian efforts undertaken by the State of Illinois. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Feeding Illinois and corporate partners are coordinating this innovative program to encourage hunters and anglers to donate deer and use Asian carp for processing into healthy, ready-to-serve meals. This effort feeds communities, lessens the Asian carp threat to our waterways and protects the Great Lakes.

"Asian carp pose a serious threat to the ecosystem of the Great Lakes, and one way to beat 'em', is to eat 'em'," Governor Pat Quinn said. "Target Hunger Now is helping us combat the fish's progression towards Lake Michigan while providing hungry families with affordable, nutritious meals."

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) started incorporating Asian carp into the 'Target Hunger Now!' menu in 2010. Using Asian carp and donated venison, the program has served over 2,200 protein rich meals to children and families throughout Illinois in the last two years.

"I want to thank Congressman Davis for this opportunity to bring to light two very important issues; hunger and protecting the health of the Great Lakes," said IDNR Director Marc Miller. "We don't want these invasive fish in our rivers, lakes and streams for several environmental and economic reasons. With that said, they are a good tasting, protein rich food source that should be used to bring nutrition to those who need it most. I've eaten it several different ways and have been impressed each and every time."

While the effort to drastically alter the Asian carp population in Illinois continues by removal and monitoring, the humanitarian and marketability of this fish continues through partners like 'Feeding Illinois' who has put forth much effort in trying to drive up consumptive demand for the fish through THN.

Like most fish, Asian carp is rich in protein. According to 'Feeding Illinois', protein is the single most expensive food source to provide to those in need. Because it is so expensive, it also means that protein is the food source most lacking in diets of those who are in most need. In March of 2011, the Illinois Department of Public Health approved Asian carp harvested from the Mississippi and lower Illinois Rivers for human consumption.

Food insecurity means a child or adult doesn't know from where their next meal will come. The recent economic downturn has deeply impacted Illinois, and food insecurity is an immediate and increasing problem. Over 1.6 million individuals participated in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in February 2011, an increase of 14 percent from 2010. Nearly a half-million Illinois children are in households facing food insecurity, and almost 2 million Illinois children were enrolled in the National School Lunch Program in the 2010-11 school year.

After the luncheon, members of the Illinois DNR, Feeding Illinois and congressional staff participated in a forum centered around key issues involving the Asian carp problem and hunger throughout the United States.

The IDNR is a key player in the fight to keep Asian carp from establishing a self sustaining population in the Great Lakes. Since 2010, Federal and state partners have executed a coordinated Asian carp monitoring and sampling strategy, dedicating more than 28,000 hours to surveying the Chicago Area Waterway System and removing Asian carp from the Illinois River in West Central Illinois.